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ABSTRACT

This handbook is divided into five parts: The introduction suggests how to approach the first year of teaching, and then dispels a number of myths about teaching. "Teaching Skills" covers general classroom management, planning lessons, paper work and grading, and working with students, including student discipline, motivation, individual needs, accessing resources for students, and special needs programs. "Socialization Skills" focuses on fitting into the established school building system, establishing a relationship with one's mentor, and establishing relationships with staff members, including the principal, other teachers, classified staff, specialists, and volunteers. "Parents" covers establishing relationships with parents and conducting parent conferences. "Coping Skills" looks at time management and stress management. (Contains 29 references.) (ND)

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ED 409 310

BEGINNING EDUCATOR HANDBOOK

A RESOURCE for FIRST YEAR EDUCATORS

Reprinted by
Idaho State Department of Education
Teacher Education and Certification

August 1994

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PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

FOREWORD

The Idaho Mentor Program was established in 1989 to pair educators new to their positions with experienced educators. The suggestions in this handbook are specifically for first-year educators.

We acknowledge and thank the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for allowing us to reproduce this publication for use in Idaho. It was developed by Educational Service District 112.

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Introduction

Introduction to the Beginning Teacher Handbook

The teacher's side of the desk is different.
Ryan (1980)

Hang in there, it does get better.
A beginning teacher

The teaching profession presents challenges which make entering this profession a unique experience. A beginning teacher has a more difficult task ahead, in many ways, than a beginner in another profession. The research on beginning teachers has focused on their concerns: classroom management, student discipline, time management, motivating students, isolation, developing relationships, and coping with heavy workloads. (See Mentor Handbook, pages 2 and 3.) In addition to the concerns expressed by beginning teachers, research by Brown & Williams (1977), Bush (1966), and Ryan (1980) outlines the following characteristics of the first year of teaching.

- A beginning teacher's job description is essentially the same as the teacher's down the hall who has five, 10, or 15 years of experience.
- Because teaching is generally done in isolation, the system does not encourage observation of others' teaching, the sharing of ideas, or group lesson planning.
- Beginning teachers often get the most difficult to teach students and other "hand-me-downs" of the system: textbooks, desks, and schedules.

- Teaching is something that has to be experienced in order to be clearly understood. Sitting in a student's desk for 16 years does not give one a true picture of what teaching is really like.

- Student teaching experiences, in general, are not extensive enough to provide a teacher with the full breadth of experiences necessary to be a master teacher.

Literature on beginning teachers has outlined the stages in teacher development. The induction stage, or the first few years of teaching, has been identified as a unique and important time in a teacher's career. Through programs like the Teacher Assistance Program (TAP), the educational community has come to realize the need to provide support to beginning teachers.

Go into teaching with an open mind. You will learn more your first year of teaching than in four years of college. Be ready for anything and everything.
A beginning teacher

During the induction period, first-year teachers generally experience what Ryan labeled "reality shock." This is the transition from being a student who learns about teaching, to being a teacher. Individuals experience "reality shock" in a variety of ways and to different degrees. Some factors which influence "reality shock" are one's preparation, familiarity with the setting of the first job, and the difficulty of the teaching assignment. Because "reality shock" is so context- and person-specific, a mentoring approach for supporting beginning teachers is a very effective approach.

The mentoring process is an excellent way to help make a beginning teacher's transition into teaching easier. TAP has provided this opportunity to a large number of first-year teachers in Washington. The Mentor Handbook has been a useful tool for the mentor teachers in TAP. This section of the Beginning Teacher/Mentor Handbook is intended to be a tool for beginning teachers as they enter the mentoring process.

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A Way of Viewing the First Year of Teaching

Each school is a social system of its own, culturally or socially different than other schools, even though sharing characteristics in common with other schools.
McDonald (1980)

There are numerous materials on the market which are intended as tools to help the beginning teacher "survive" during the induction period. Many of these materials are listed in the reference section of this handbook. "Survival" is an appropriate goal for the beginning teacher. It is hoped that the ideas presented in this handbook, used in conjunction with the mentoring process, will assist in moving the first-year teacher through the survival stage more quickly. The intent of this handbook is to help the beginning teacher develop an image or a vision of what it means to be a teacher, to begin to move toward teacher efficacy, and to grow as a professional.

Teacher efficacy means "I know I can teach any and all of these kids."
Joyce, Hersh, McKibben (1983)

According to McDonald (1982), the beginning teacher has two major tasks. The first is to develop effective teaching skills. If a beginning teacher has been well-prepared with a solid theoretical base in child development, learning theory, and instructional methodology, then the task becomes one of application of this knowledge to one's own classroom.

The second task a beginning teacher must tackle is to adapt to the social system of the school. Each school building has its own "climate," or atmosphere that can be sensed upon entering a building. This climate reflects the formal and informal norms of the building, the communication and relationships between students and staff, and staff members' relationships with other staff members. Unless a beginning teacher has spent a great deal of time in them, he/she may not have an understanding of schools. A sense of how a school's social system functions cannot be learned from a textbook.

Notes

Myths about Teaching

The following myths are some general observations about teaching that are not found in textbooks. Think about them as the year progresses, discuss them with your mentor, and add your own myths as you go along.

- **There is a *perfect lesson.*** Teaching is a massive job, with so many variables that is is impossible to achieve 100 percent. What is a perfect lesson? (All 30 plus students on task for the whole lesson, learning everything possible and loving it?) Examine your limits: time, student motivation, student ability, and materials. Form a mental image of what you expect out of your lessons, and work toward that vision. Don't measure yourself against your mentor or the illusive *perfect lesson.*

- **You will receive recognition from the principal and colleagues for doing a good job.** Teaching is done in isolation, and most teachers in your building (with the exception of your mentor) will probably never see you teach. In general, principals are very busy people and may or may not get into your room on a regular basis. Most beginning teachers get their rewards from their students. If you are the type of person who needs recognition from colleagues, you will need to find ways to get it. (Invite the principal in, put on a play for another class, display student work in the hallway, plan an activity that involves other classes and teachers, or ask other teachers into your room.)

- **Things will go exactly as you planned.** As a teacher, you have limited control over what goes on in your classroom. Teaching requires a great deal of flexibility. One always must be ready to "monitor and adjust" a lesson—*that* is expected. The external things over which a teacher has *no* control really call on the ability to be flexible: unexpected assemblies, messages from the office, students arriving late, impromptu visits by administrators, fire drills, or equipment failures. Plan on "things" not going as planned. Learn how to deal with the stress from the unexpected.

- **All teachers act in a professional manner all of the time.** There is a good deal of unprofessional behavior that goes on in schools, especially in the staff lounge or teachers' work room. Fortunately, the extreme cases occur rarely, while the gray areas of unprofessionalism happen all the time. Develop a mental image of what being a professional teacher means to you. Be prepared to modify it, while maintaining your standards. Discuss this with your mentor. Avoid those who talk negatively about students, other teachers, administrators, and parents. It is easy to get stuck in a complaining mode. Make a conscious choice to talk about solutions, not problems.

- **Teachers live in the schools and never go home.** Teachers are people with many other roles and commitments. As a first-year teacher, you must expect to put in extra time planning lessons, searching for materials, and grading papers.

Try not to take on any extra commitments during the first year. A teacher always walks the line between professional versus personal life. Everyone draws this line in a different place. However, how much personal time you put into your job should be a reasoned choice, one that weighs carefully *your* resources of money, time, and energy.

- **Teachers can get all their lesson ideas from teachers' guides.** Teachers draw ideas for lessons from a variety of resources. Learning to think like a teacher enables you to use ideas from every available source and adapt those ideas to your subject area and skill levels of students. (Ideas can come from other teachers, conferences, books, or the real world.) Those files of activities you were going to start in college—start them now!

- **Teachers can be all things to all students.** Public expectations sometimes suggest that teachers' roles should encompass all students' needs. It is unrealistic to expect that any one person can meet all the needs of thirty or more students. It is important to recognize when you need to be an advocate for a student and *get help* when you need it. Don't try to do it all yourself; get to know the resource people in your district.

- **All the activities in a school building are carried out as written in the policies and handbooks.** Informal norms operate in all schools. Learning the formal norms is a must, and one learns the informal norms as they are experienced (who sits where in the faculty room, who *really* can get the materials you need, the policy says no gum chewing but it is not enforced).

- **Because you care so much about them, students will proportionately care about and respect you.** You have chosen teaching as a profession. Many people enter teaching because they love children. Children are "involuntary participants" in the schooling process. Many of your students will love school and love their teachers in spite of the fact that attendance is mandatory. (This is typical at kindergarten but tends to fade as the grade levels progress.) Don't expect all of your students to love school and love their teacher.

WRITE YOUR OWN MYTHS:

-
-
-

Teaching Skills

General Classroom Management

Classroom management and discipline were the most frequently mentioned topics, accounting for 60 percent of the total times all topics were mentioned.
Johnston (1978)

Veenman (1984) observed that classroom management is the most often reported concern of beginning teachers. Classroom management is most likely a concern (to some degree) for *all* teachers. When 25 to 30 children are placed in one room at the same time with one teacher, some system of order must exist so that learning may take place.

Much information and several excellent models are available on classroom management. Some resources are listed in the reference section of this handbook. Below are some "bottom line," practical considerations that many classroom management models have in common.

General Considerations

Classroom management is not simply establishing rules and routines which you will use for the remainder of your teaching career. The rules and routines you choose will vary depending on the building and its principal (policies and informal norms), room size and location, students (grade level, maturity, cliques), activities, time of year, and most importantly your philosophy of education.

- Work on that mental image of what you want your room to be like. What is the feeling? How does it look (ordered, relaxed)? How does it sound (low buzz,

quiet)? What does it say to your students? Can *every* student learn here?

- Be flexible. Hang on to those things that work, but don't be afraid to stop doing those things that don't. Few teachers use one model or approach to classroom management. They borrow from several models to create the learning environment they want for their students.

Be flexible and super organized. Learn from others and from your mistakes. Have fun.
A beginning teacher

- On the other hand, don't give up on a new idea too quickly. One must give a new idea a fair chance, and that means allowing time to practice, make mistakes, observe effects, and adjust.

- Students need continuity and stability. Avoid making frequent drastic changes in, for example, seating order, expectations, and rules. Make changes only when necessary.

- Base changes you make in classroom management on reasons which are educationally sound. A large body of solid research is available today. Consult the experts. (See reference section.)

- The key to classroom management is to be *proactive*. This means "organizing the classroom to maximize time on task. It is based on the ability of the teacher to foresee instruction" (Cummings, 1980).

- Develop a resource file for classroom management with ideas from conferences, books, workshops, and other teachers. You should eventually have several different ways on file to carry out every routine task.

On pages 66 and 67 in the Mentor Handbook, there is a checklist for "Preparing for the First Day." Some additional suggestions are on the following pages.

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Beginning-of-the-Year Checklist

Routines:

- ❑ Entering classroom
- ❑ Expectations before class begins
- ❑ Attendance/lunch count/milk
- ❑ Housekeeping assignments
- ❑ Seating chart
- ❑ Emergency procedures
- ❑ Use of restroom (between class/during)
- ❑ Use of playground equipment
- ❑ Use of pencil sharpener/drinking fountain
- ❑ Teachers' desk, supply cabinets, students' desks
- ❑ Movement of students in room
- ❑ Expected supplies & consequences for not bringing them
- ❑ Paper headings/paper and handwriting expectations
- ❑ Where to turn in completed work
- ❑ How to return corrected work
- ❑ How to exchange papers to correct/how to mark
- ❑ What if work is finished early?
- ❑ Behavior and duties in halls
- ❑ Playground rules
- ❑ Daily & weekly schedule
- ❑ End of the day duties
- ❑ Bus rules
- ❑ Coffee fees
- ❑ Sunshine club
- ❑ Use of office equipment
- ❑ Arranging for a substitute
- ❑
- ❑
- ❑
- ❑
- ❑
- ❑
- ❑

To Find out:

- ❑ Teacher lunch
- ❑ Parking
- ❑ Keys
- ❑ Money-in-room policy
- ❑ Attendance
- ❑ Phone use policy
- ❑ Playground rules
- ❑ Bus rules
- ❑ Substitute folder
- ❑ School rules
- ❑ Class list
- ❑ Arrangement of room
- ❑ Seating chart/name tags on desks
- ❑ Policy on parents picking students up before school lets out
- ❑ Where to keep materials and supplies
- ❑ How to get materials and supplies
- ❑ How to order materials
- ❑ How does the custodian want the classroom left?
- ❑ A.V./film material checkout procedures
- ❑ Can you keep students after school? If so what are the procedures?
- ❑ Scheduled time for students to attend special classes
- ❑ Copy machine procedures
- ❑ Cumulative files
- ❑ What people resources are available: counselor, nurse, etc.
- ❑ Field trip policies
- ❑ When are staff meetings?
- ❑ Get lesson plan book
- ❑ Find out the principal's requirements for lesson plans
- ❑ Get teacher guides for textbooks, get scope and sequence for textbooks
- ❑ Get copy of report card you will be expected to use
- ❑ Grading system/roster
- ❑ Break/lunch procedures
- ❑ Assembly procedures
- ❑ Bulletin boards
- ❑ Develop a checklist or folder for new students (especially if you teach in an area of very mobile population). Include all that you have to do to acquaint new students (desk, books, rules, routines).
- ❑
- ❑

Planning Lessons

Don't cut corners.
Give 100 percent.
Stay long hours.
Prepare lessons carefully.
Build a learning environment.
Make friends in the building.
A beginning teacher

Lesson planning is a critical part of effective teaching. Planning always seems to take more time than expected. In teacher training programs and student teaching, beginning teachers are exposed to a variety of models of teaching and lesson designs. The task is to put all of this background knowledge to work in a useful, meaningful, and practical way.

Working from a teachers' guide to a curriculum series is a good starting point. At the minimum, a teacher should read through the material and adjust the presentation and content for each particular group of students before presenting the lesson. As familiarity with the curriculum and students develops, he/she can then move on to more well-developed lessons, enlisting other resources or planning by themes, varying strategies, and designing your own activities.

General Considerations

- Be sure to check existing district learning criteria for your grade level or subject, for example Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), or minimum competencies.

- Learn what the principal requires for lesson plans. Do lesson plans have to be turned in? Do they need to be completed in a certain format? How specific must lesson plans be?

- Find out if your plan book needs to be turned in at the end of the year. If so, you may want to make copies of your plans each week, and make notes to yourself on your copy. Schools usually provide lesson plan books. Lesson plan books also are available at teacher supply stores.

Be organized. Use other teachers for ideas. Enjoy!
A beginning teacher

- Write your plans in pencil at first. Use another color to make comments about the lesson, absent students, notes on what to do differently next time, and what worked especially well.

- One time saver is to make a master plan for the week. Write in the routine things—attendance, recess, and breaks. Duplicate this form and write in only the things that vary.

- In planning a lesson, try to visualize the instructional sequence step-by-step. Visualize what the student—and you—will be doing during the lesson. Imagine different students' points of view. Visualize the possible worst scenarios too. Try to see the lesson from different students' points of view.

- Until you are familiar with each area of the curriculum, work on well-developed plans for one subject area at a time. Allow time for some subjects to become routine until you have time to make more well-developed plans. Don't try to do it all at once.

- It will take a while to get to know your students—what kinds of lessons they respond to, what kinds they don't, and their skill levels, preferences, and attitudes. Try different things. Reuse what works, and throw out the things that don't work. After you have a grasp on what you want your students to learn and what they can handle, then you can adapt the curriculum.

- Generally, it is better to be over-planned (be ready with more than you think can be completed in the period allowed), than under-planned.

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- Pacing is an important consideration in lesson planning and execution. Judging the time needed to present a lesson will get easier as you become familiar with the curriculum and the students. Pacing also refers to how fast the lesson moves. By closely monitoring your students, you can begin to judge whether you need to speed up or slow down.

- Decide when and where it is best for you to do your lesson planning—at school or home, before school, during lunch or prep time, after school, or on weekends? Check the policy about using the building after work hours and on weekends.

- During your first year, plan to spend extra time (time above and beyond the work day) for planning.

- Begin to think like a teacher. This means that you generate ideas for lessons, or that fit into lessons, from all different kinds of sources—other teachers, books, your own ideas, sources from real life, radio, television, billboards, or your own creative mind.

- Extra time at the end of a period can be productive if students know there are things they can do (read a library book, or work on other unfinished assignments).

- Grouping students for instruction can be a challenging task. If your building has cross-grade grouping, assignments may have been made in the spring. If not, you will get help from other teachers. For homogeneous and heterogeneous grouping within your class, you can use, as general indicators, standardized test scores, placement tests, tracking cards, notes, and grades from previous teachers. It is helpful to do whole-group activities

for the first few weeks, before dividing students into groups. This allows you to *observe* your students' skills and performances for yourself.

- There are many instructional models available for teachers to use. You may wish to use all of one model or just certain parts. Use one that you are comfortable with, and then branch out and try others. The classroom management resources listed in the reference section describe many models.

- The "effective schools research" says that teachers in effective schools use a variety of teaching strategies. Following are some different teaching strategies which may be useful when you are planning and trying to think of alternative methods:

  Lectures (Overuse is common. Before you lecture, be sure that it is the best or only way of transmitting the required information.)
  Work sheets/workbooks (Watch overusing—have educationally sound reasons for using.)
  Brainstorming
  Individual packets
  Guided discovery
  Overhead transparencies
  Graphs
  Bulletin boards
  Interest centers
  Games
  Problem solving
  Films, videos, tapes, filmstrips
  Records
  Drama/puppets/radio plays
  Guest speakers
  Role playing/simulations
  Field trips
  Sharing
  Flash cards

Puzzles
Computers
Reference books, magazines, newspapers
Questioning strategies
Book making
Manipulatives
Cooperative learning activities (see references, Johnson & Johnson)
Visualization
Inventions
Skits
Video presentations
Cartooning
Student-created board games
Posters
Mind mapping
Characterizations
"Rap" sessions
Debate
Mock court
Interviews
Independent projects
Murals
Mobiles
Team teaching
Journal writing
Other:

Paper Work and Grading

One of the realities of teaching is the seemingly never-ending paper work: cumulative record cards, grading, district reports, progress reports, and parent contracts. Following are some suggestions for keeping the paper work under control.

- Post weekly, monthly, or regular schedules where you can refer to them quickly. If the information is for students (lunch schedules, testing dates, or health screenings), post it where they can see it.

- Develop a filing system for general paper work, and file things which you may need in the future. Some categories might be: weekly bulletins, monthly newsletters, district catalogs, organizations, orders, district information, today, this week, next week, hold, and future ideas.

- Throw out junk mail and things you know you won't need, to avoid being buried in paper.

- Keep track of meetings and assemblies on your calendar or lesson plan book.

- Keep a daily or weekly "to do" list. Refer to it often, and check off completed items.

- Develop separate files for your grade levels and subject areas.

- Get a copy of the report card you are to use, before school starts and *before* you set up your grading system.

- Discuss with your mentor many building policies on late work, grade breakdowns, homework policies, grading systems (A-F or S-U).

Be consistent at all costs!
Positive attitudes are contagious.
Hang in there.
A beginning teacher

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- Decide lesson by lesson the following:
  Will it be graded?
  How will it be graded?
  Who will grade the lesson?
  When will it be graded?
  Where will it be recorded?

- Get cumulative record folders on your students at the beginning of the year. There is one philosophy that says don't read cumulative files, so as to avoid pre-judging students. The trade-off to this is that there may be important information in the cumulative files about health conditions or home situations which may aid your understanding of the student.

- Progress reports (weekly, monthly) are an excellent way of letting the students and parents know the current status of the students' grades. They are also a good way of keeping on top of grading.

- Try color coding different categories of paper work. This is especially helpful in the case of student handouts. Use different colored paper for tests, rough and final drafts.

- Discuss with your mentor different ways to check for student understanding, and give corrective feedback in a timely manner.

Discuss with your mentor the following:

The "effective schools" literature says, that if it is worth the students' time doing, it is worth the teacher grading it.	Harry Wong says that teachers already know the answers to the problems and it is a waste of the teacher's time correcting papers. Let the students do it.

Where do your beliefs fall on this continuum?

Working with Students

Student Discipline

There are those who believe that the better the job in planning and executing lessons, the more highly motivated the students, and the fewer discipline problems
Sally Lorenz-Reeves

There are many models for dealing with student discipline that can be found in the classroom management resources listed at the end of this section. The following are some "bottom line" practical suggestions.

Don't be afraid to be strict.
Don't expect to be perfect.
Get lots of rest.
Don't take home lots of work.
A beginning teacher

- You will need to consider district and building policies on student discipline when establishing class rules. Get a copy of the teachers' handbook, parent handbook and/or student handbook for your district or building. If your building subscribes to a particular model, such as "Assertive Discipline," you will be expected to follow that system.

- Observe the informal norms of the building and discuss these with your mentor and principal. Do teachers enforce the established rules? Does the principal follow through on discipline referrals? Is the detention room effective?

- Form a mental image of what you want your classroom to be like and what would best meet the needs of your students and yourself. Your task will be to integrate your beliefs about conditions that help children learn (academic, behavior, social, emotional) with the practical limitations of the setting. You can create the classroom environment which you feel best meets the learning needs of your students.

Be positive, sincere, consistent.
A beginning teacher

- When you decide what your rules and routines will be, be proactive. Set up your expectations ahead of time. Use four to five rules, teach them to your students, have students practice rules, and be clear about which behaviors are unacceptable.

- Post (in large print) your basic classroom rules and expectations. Include the consequences, then follow your rules firmly, fairly, and consistently.

- Consequences for unacceptable behavior should be logical and appropriate. Many teachers use a modified assertive discipline system in which one check is a warning, two is a missed recess, and three is a call home. Consequences should be proportionate to the severity of the offense. They may range from a nonverbal expression, a verbal warning, or withdrawal of a privilege.

- Above all else, be consistent.

- Reward appropriate behavior—tell the students when they are doing things right. Tie the positive to the desired behavior.

- Have contingency plans for individuals for whom your system doesn't work (private conferences, learning or behavior contacts).

- Develop the habit of continually scanning the classroom. Be aware of what is going on everywhere in your room at all times.

- Establish a signal that will call the whole class to immediate attention. Practice using this signal until you get the expected behavior. Some teachers allow the students to choose the word or signal. The signal may be changed to reflect seasons, holidays or units of study.

- Observe your class and make note of the activities which seem to quiet them down. You can always switch to one of these activities if necessary.

- If a planned activity is out of the normal range of expectations (field trip, lab experiment), take plenty of time before the activity begins to establish behavior expectations.

- Avoid putting yourself in a power struggle with a student. "In any toe-to-toe confrontation between teacher and student, it is always the student who wins!" (Dave Cox)

- Avoid allowing the class to be drawn off task by a behavior problem or discipline issue. A quiet, private conference is always preferable to confronting a student in front of his/her peers.

- Avoid making threats to students which you cannot carry out.

- New teachers seem to reach a point, either in student teaching or in their first year of teaching, at which they learn not to take the discipline of students personally. A student's choice to break a rule is not usually an expression of dislike or a reflection on the teacher's ability or personality. Once a teacher comes to this realization, discipline becomes easier.

Hang in there!
Put in lots of extra time.
Enjoy your students.
A beginning teacher

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Student Motivation

Believe you make a difference.
Use different teaching strategies
to help different learning styles.
A beginning teacher

There are a variety of theories of motivation. In the reference section, most resources on classroom management include something on motivation. How you attempt to motivate your students depends on your belief system and also ties back into that mental image of what you want your classroom to be like. Here are some suggestions to think about and/or discuss with your mentor.

- Are students intrinsically motivated or extrinsically motivated? (If you believe, for example, that students are extrinsically motivated, then you may be comfortable with some form of behavior modification or token system.)
- How do you feel about using token systems (marbles in a jar, etc.) for groups or individuals?
- Do you feel students' work should be posted, and if so, what items—good work, all work, test scores, skill charts, grades?
- Is competition a good way to motivate individuals or groups?
- Is teamwork a good way to motivate individuals or groups?
- How does self-esteem relate to student motivation?
- How does the subject matter relate to student motivation?
- How does the relevancy of the lesson for students relate to student motivation?
- How does the execution of the lesson relate to student motivation?

Individual Needs

Many classroom management and undergraduate teacher preparation programs seem to focus on students in groups. Research shows large group instruction is a powerful tool when used appropriately. Once a teacher has more specialized training in counseling, diagnosis, or teaching specific skills, he/she can begin to analyze and directly address the needs of individual students. Teaching really is working with individuals—it is just that the one teacher works with 30 or so individuals at one time.

One task for the classroom teacher is to find the balance between meeting the learning needs of the individual and meeting the learning needs of the group. These decisions are made almost moment-to-moment in teaching. (Do I explain the problem one more time for Johnny when I'm pretty sure the rest of the group understands it?) This balancing act becomes automatic with experience. The basic rule of thumb is: if four or five students have basic questions after instruction, it is time to rephrase, reexplain, or reteach.

- Adjusting to the individual learning needs of students becomes easier once you have been through the curriculum more than once. Then you know better what your students are expected to know and what they will need to know next. A scope and sequence chart is helpful, but the actual experience of teaching the curriculum is more valuable.

- Some concepts which help address the learning needs of students are: academic learning time, active participation, learning contracts, grouping according to skills, tutorials, cooperative learning, and learning styles. (Details about these concepts can be found in the classroom management resources listed in the reference section.)

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- Two practical questions that may help are:
  1. Will each of your students learn something from this activity?
  2. Is this the best use of this student's time?

Accessing Resources for Students

Teachers often become advocates for their students whose nonacademic needs (physical, psychological, and social) are not being met. Usually these needs fall in the range of educational needs. However, sometimes a teacher must be able to help a student or parent access resources for nonacademic needs.

- Parents often ask their child's teacher what they can do at home. A teacher can always suggest titles of good books, or how to find a math tutor. Develop a file of ideas suggesting what parents can do at home.

- More difficult situations arise when students need things like school supplies, eye glasses, medical attention, or counseling, and parents can't or won't provide them. Be prepared to access building, district, and community resources.

- A general guideline for accessing resources for students is to work with the parents and start with building resources (principal, school nurse, or counselor). If you do need to go beyond the building level, discuss the situation with the appropriate administrators first.

- Most districts will have policies for reporting child abuse and neglect. Read them. Discuss specific cases with your mentor. Be aware of your legal rights and responsibilities.

Special Needs Programs

Each student who enters your classroom will bring with him or her unique personalities, background and skills. You will have the training necessary to deal with most of these differences. Some students may require additional help. This is one time to use your resources and get assistance. Some of your students may be identified for special help within the school system. Your building or district may have programs to provide additional assistance to students and the classroom teacher.

- Investigate the special programs available in your building, district, and community.
- Find out procedures and requirements for placement into special programs.
- Arrange to observe those programs in which you have students placed. You will then have a better understanding of what your students do when they leave your room for special help.
- Team up with resource teachers. Get suggestions for helping students in your class who come from special populations.
- Use your own resources (conferences, books, workshops, classes, other teachers) to find out as much as you can about meeting the learning needs of students in special programs.
- Discuss with resource people about what the special needs are of students in special programs.
- Take advantage of the special skills and knowledge of counselors, school psychologists, therapists, and school nurses.

Notes

Socialization Skills

Fitting In

One of the striking features of teaching as an occupation is its inseparability from the organizational context of a school.
Lortie (1973)

Don't try to compete.
Get lots of advice from fellow teachers.
Try your best, and take lots of vitamins to ward off illnesses.
A beginning teacher

The second major task that a beginning teacher must tackle, according to McDonald, is that of socialization, or learning how to fit into the established "mini social system" of the building. One can learn the formal norms of the district and building by reading policies, handbooks, and the negotiated contract. The best way to learn the informal norms is through someone who is a part of that mini social system: a mentor.

A beginning teacher who enters a building where the climate is supportive, friendly, and cooperative will likely have an easy time adjusting to the new position. A beginning teacher who enters a building where the climate is negative, dysfunctional, and/or unaccepting of newcomers can expect a more difficult adjustment period and probably a good deal of stress.

- Find out the formal norms from the principal and mentor or another trusted colleague before school starts—district policies, school rules, parent handbooks, teacher handbooks, teacher contract, etc.

- Observe the relationships of people in the building. Find out the answers to these kinds of questions. How do teachers interact with other teachers? How do teachers interact with the principal? How do teachers interact with other staff

members? How do students interact with each other? What are teachers' attitudes toward parents and the community?

- Observe informal norms and discuss them with your mentor. Some informal norms might be:
  - What do teachers talk about in the teachers' lounge or teachers' work room?
  - How do teachers dress for work?
  - Who in the building really has the power to get things done?
  - Does the principal follow through?
  - Are there cliques in the staff?
  - What other positions in the community are held by staff members?
  - What is the informal norm for student behavior in the halls?

- It takes time to learn the informal norms of a building. Even with the help of a mentor, this is still somewhat a trial-and-error process. Reserve making judgments. Be as professional as you know how, and don't expect to fit in immediately.

- Seek out additional mentors. Avoid teachers who appear to be negative. Remember you are establishing habits which may last a career.

Establishing a Relationship with Your Mentor

by Sue Chadwick, Educational Service District 123

The nice thing about teamwork is that you always have others on your side.
Margaret Carty

Of utmost importance to your experience as a first-year teacher is the development of a good relationship with your mentor teacher. Several researchers have examined mentor-protege relationships in depth. They have discovered several personal characteristics that allow a relationship to grow.

Cleta Galvez-Hyornevik (1985) cites several studies that discuss mentor-protege relationships. In one 1980 study by Weber it was found that after the initial contact, the mentor-protege attraction is based on two major factors: (1) whether the protege respects the mentor as a person; and (2) whether the protege admires the mentor's knowledge, experience and style.

George and Kummerow in 1981 research (Galvez-Hyornevik, 1985) found the following traits to be characteristic of "a good protege":

- Positive minded
- A confident, *can do* sort of person
- More complimentary than critical in interactions with others
- Maintains a *thick skin*, focusing on organizational issues rather than personal ones
- An ability to laugh at oneself
- An insightful attitude about themselves and others
- Conscientious, well-organized and hard-working

In 1984 studies by Zey (Glavez-Hyornevik, 1985), traits that mentors look for in their proteges were cited as follows:

- Intelligence (defined as the ability to analyze a problem rapidly)
- Ambition
- Ability to perform the mentor's job
- Loyalty
- Similar perceptions of work and the organization
- Desire and ability to accept power and risk
- Need and ability to accept responsibility

By working to develop these qualities, a beginning teacher can generate greater appeal and establish a strong working relationship as a protege to a mentor teacher.

Everyone must row with the oars he has.
English Proverb

- Review the traits listed in this research with your mentor teacher. Discuss which traits are important to each of you and your relationship.

- Which of these characteristic traits do you currently feel you possess? Think of ways you can develop some of the traits that may be new to your way of thinking.

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Establishing Relationships with Staff Members

The Principal

Expect a hard and busy year.
It's not a picnic, but it is enjoyable.
A beginning teacher

The principal has a strong influence on the climate of the building. Effective principals are competent instructional leaders and competent at managing discipline problems. They are fair and supportive of teachers, and have students' best interests in mind.

- Basically, the principal has the responsibility for everything that goes on in a building. Often a beginning teacher finds himself/herself in a situation about which the principal needs to know. It is best to inform the principal of the situation as soon as possible.

- When bringing outsiders into the building or taking students out of the building, ask or inform the principal before he/she hears about it from someone else.

- Principals are very busy people. Discuss with your mentor how to approach the principal—should you make an appointment, talk in the hallway, meet before or after school, or send notes?

- Usually it is the principal (or vice-principal) who evaluates teachers. Before school starts or early in the school year, find out from the principal how and when you will be evaluated and with what instrument.

- The principal usually will go over with the beginning teacher many of the items on the beginning-of-the-year checklist. (See pages A 9 and A 10.) The beginning

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teacher can make his/her own checklist from other sources, and ask the principal for pertinent information (ordering supplies, after-hours building use, lesson plans).

- Inform the principal immediately if an injury, emergency, or any situation which might get back to the principal, superintendent, or school board members occurs.

Other Teachers

Teachers' attitudes and interactions also help set the climate of the school building. Some buildings will, as a whole, be more receptive to newcomers than others. Within each building, a beginning teacher will find supportive teachers and those willing to share materials and assist with informal norms. Your assigned mentor has taken on the responsibility of being the major support for a beginning teacher. In addition, other teachers will be happy to serve as informal mentors.

- Visualize what it means to you to be a professional How does a professional dress, and communicate about students, teaching, and the school? Discuss this with your mentor. Act in the best professional way that you know how.

- Observe how teachers interact with each other and their attitudes toward students, and avoid making quick judgments.

- Seek out those teachers who will be helpful to you. Avoid the unhelpful and negative types.

- Try not to get aligned with a clique until you have observed enough to decide which clique, if any, you want to be associated with.

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- Do not expect to be immediately accepted by all the teachers in your building. As you demonstrate your competence and willingness to learn and cooperate, this acceptance will come.

- Do your share to help with building projects, but don't allow too many extras (usually things that no one else wants to do) be added to your assignment. Learn to say no! Don't overextend yourself the first year.

- Try to handle intra-staff controversies or conflicts in a way that keeps your students' best interests paramount. Discuss with your mentor how to resolve conflicts, and explore options before reacting.

It was worth the hard work.
A beginning teacher

Classified Staff Members

In general, classified staff members will have the qualifications for their particular position, but will not have received the training and college course work that teachers have. Each staff member in the building has a role that directly or indirectly affects students' learning and the climate of the school building. It is important to treat classified staff with courtesy and to respect their important roles in the school.

- **School secretaries** have a great deal of informal authority. Establish a positive relationship with the secretary as soon as possible. Find out before school starts how things need to be done—phone-use policies, attendance, lunch, reduced lunches, forms, information needed from students the first day, use of office equipment, and cumulative record files. Ask the secretaries what they expect of you.

- **Custodians** also hold a position with potential for informal power. Establish a

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positive relationship with the custodians by letting them know that you want to cooperate. Before school starts, find out what they do and how they would like to have things done. What may you expect them to do for you? How do they want the room left at the end of the day? Who cleans the chalk boards and erasers?)

Discuss with the custodians how they see their role:

What are their duties?
What about use of their equipment?
If there is a spill, would they rather have the students get the mop and clean it up, or inform the custodian?
Do they do minor repairs, or is there a separate maintenance department?
What is the procedure for getting new equipment in the room?
Are there things like desks and tables or old overheads stored away somewhere that might be useful to you?

- **Teacher aides** play a variety of roles, clerical, instructional, assisting individual students, or working with small groups. Teachers generally work more directly and in a more supervisory capacity with aides than with other classified staff. The role of aides is to assist the teacher with paper work or certain kinds of instruction, under the teacher's direction. Their role is not to replace a teacher, but to extend academic learning time for students.

- Train aides for the tasks you expect them to do. Explain, model, have them practice, give feedback, etc. If the tasks you are asking an aide to do are clerical, routine and repetitive, this may be all the instruction that is needed.

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- If you have an instructional aide, establishing expectations and training is potentially more complicated. Introduce the aide to the class and make him/her feel welcome. Explain rules and expected student behaviors.

- Monitor the aide's work and be ready to assist if necessary.

- Don't spend more time preparing tasks for aides to do than it would take to do the tasks yourself.

Specialists

Building staffs typically include several itinerant staff members. These are usually specialists in physical education, music, and media. These specialists generally meet with the whole class or whole grade level a few times a week. They usually must divide their time between two or more buildings. Scheduling is always difficult. You can help by having your class ready on time and being understanding if the previous class runs late. Behavior management is usually a concern to these specialists too. They may only see your class for a 30-45 minute period twice a week. Work with the specialists in setting up consistent expectations for student behavior. These teachers also can be a good resource for classroom ideas in their content area.

Relax.
A beginning teacher

Other specialists may include those who teach in special programs: remedial, special education, migrant, English as a second language, or gifted and talented. Many of these will be "pull-out" programs in which your students leave the room, individually or in small groups, for short periods of time during the day.

Scheduling the best times for students to leave the regular classroom is always a challenge to both classroom teachers and specialists. Be empathetic to scheduling. Work to find the best times for the students to leave class. Dis-

cuss make-up work (or not), grading (or not), homework (or not), and coordination of lessons in and out of class. Parents also are good potential resources for [illegible] students in these special programs.

Volunteers

Volunteers such as parents, older students, and community members can be helpful to the teacher in a variety of ways. Volunteers, like aides, can help with clerical tasks—grading, record keeping, bulletin boards, using the copy machine, or making packets. These types of activities are relatively easy to explain and can be time-consuming for the teacher. Volunteers also can provide extra time and attention for individual students. Having volunteers in your room can help promote good public relations between community, parents and the school.

Either policies or informal norms regarding the use of volunteers are likely to exist in your building. Discuss with your mentor whether or not to include volunteers in your classroom, and if so, when and how.

If your building has a well established volunteer program, find out how it works and how to use it. If your building does not have an established program, check with the principal before you spend time making plans.

Recruiting and training volunteers is different than using teacher aides. Aides are already a part of the "mini social system," they will have some skills and some sense of what goes on in the school, and they understand their roles. Teacher aides also have some authority in this system.

Following are some considerations for the effective use of volunteers:

- Check out the [illegible] and informal norms concerning volunteers.
- Decide what tasks you will have volunteers do.

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- Recruit volunteers—parents, community members, students, or senior citizens.

- Screen potential volunteers. Are they good role models for students? If they are parents of children in your class, how will the students react? Will they be reliable? Are they available when you need them?

- Orient, train, or set up your expectations with the volunteers, as a group or individually. Make them a part of your class. Take time to do this when you are not working with students.

- Set up a schedule.

- Continually monitor the work the volunteers are doing and how they are feeling about what they do.

- Debrief with the volunteer as often as possible, to make sure there was no misinterpretation of things that went on in class.

- Reward and recognize the work that volunteers do.

Notes

Parents

The familiarity of schools often gets in the way of understanding them.
Dreeben (1970)

Establishing Relationships with Parents

Establish good communiction with parents.
A beginning teacher

Teacher training programs focus their attention on how to deal with students. Usually, very little information on dealing with parents is provided. Being proactive with parents, by establishing positive relationships early in the school year, helps make dealing with the problems that arise an easier task.

The general attitude of parents toward the school will vary from community to community. In some communities parents may be intimidated by the school, have negative or even hostile feelings about the school, or feel that the school conflicts with certain family values or religious beliefs. In some communities, parents will be extremely interested in the school even to the point of being demanding. If a beginning teacher is unfamiliar with the community, it is a good idea to get to know the community. Drive around, go in stores, read the local newspaper, or ride the school bus.

- Early in the school year, let parents know your expectations regarding illnesses, absences, and homework. Ask parents what they expect of you.

- Parent participation in school functions will vary. Discuss with your mentor which events involve parents. Use a district calendar and your mentor's experience to highlight and plan for these regular activities. Activities may include

open house, or back-to-school night, parent-teacher conferences, school programs, fund-raisers, and sports events.

- Use your mental image of what it means to be a professional, to help you decide how much involvement you want with parents. Discuss this with your mentor.

- If you decide to use parents as volunteers, check out your building policies and informal norms about parents in the classrooms. (See the section on volunteers.)

- Find out if parents are allowed to drop in to observe your class, and what procedure they are expected to follow.

- Before school starts, some teachers send a letter home to each parent and/or student, welcoming the student into the classroom and outlining some expectations, needed supplies, etc.

- Weekly or monthly newsletters keep parents informed about what is going on in school. These can be written by teachers and/or students.

- Calls home to parents, early in the year, just to establish positive relationships (no complaints about the students) are a helpful technique. Some teachers set a goal of calling one parent a day.

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Parent Conferences

- Be prepared to LISTEN. Sometimes parents come into a conference with their own concerns. Asking an open-ended question at the beginning of the conference sometimes gives parents the opportunity to express their feelings and/or concerns.

- Be professional. Many of your parents (and students) will have different backgrounds, attitudes, beliefs, and socio-economic status than you. All parents need to be treated with respect and courtesy. Being professional also means not talking about other students, parents, or teachers.

- Be prepared with samples of the student's work. This helps provide specific information for parents. Be careful not to compare the student's work with the work of other students.

- Have something to say about each student's strengths as well as areas which need improvement.

- Be prepared with ideas for parents to help the children at home. You will handle this differently depending on the student, the parent and the material. It is always a sound idea to have a list of good books your students can read or be read to, good children's magazines, upcoming educational T.V. shows, a list of museum programs, etc. If you choose to have parents work with their children on specific skills, you will need to provide them with some specific directions. (See the volunteer section.)

Enjoyable but exhausting.
A beginning teacher

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- During scheduled conferences try to keep your conferences on time. If you have a say in the schedule, plan extra time for parents you know will require more time and less time for parents you know won't show up. If you are running over and have parents waiting, schedule more time with the parent at another date.

- If you have students in special programs, either get information from their other teachers to relay to parents, or ask the other teachers to sit in on the conference.

- If you expect a difficult conference, ask the principal to sit in. Discuss this with your mentor. There may be a more appropriate person, such as the special education director or the vice-principal.

- When discussing behavioral problems with parents, have a specific list of incidents to relay. Stick to facts and avoid judgments

- Watch using "educationalese." Use language to which parents can relate, but be professional too.

- If you suspect that you have parents who don't speak English, ask their children. If you are not fluent in their language, arrange for an interpreter.

- If you have agreed to find out information for the parent or send information home, make sure this gets on a "to do" list.

- If you have forms which the parents need to sign, this is a good time to get it done.

- If you choose to share standardized test scores with parents, be sure you are ready to explain what they indicate and what they are *not* intended to mean. Your

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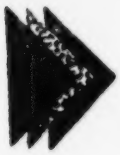
district may have a policy on this, check it out.

- Hold conferences only during regular building hours or when there are other teachers around.

- Don't be afraid to terminate a conference and reschedule it. Rescheduling a conference may be necessary because a conflict arises and you are unable to reach a resolution.

- End the conference by summarizing concerns and courses of action. Some districts have a summary form to document what teachers and parents agreed upon during the conference.

Notes



Coping Skills

Another difficulty which surprises many beginning teachers is that teaching is a tough job.
Ryan (1980)

One concern beginning teachers have reported is the lack of time to accomplish all the tasks the teaching job requires. There is simply too much to do. Experienced teachers have developed routines, time savers, and short cuts over the years. A mentor, teaching at the same grade level or in the same subject area as a beginning teacher, should have gathered some valuable time savers and helpful hints to share.

"Reality shock" was defined at the beginning of this handbook supplement as an adjustment period into teaching. "Reality shock" and the day-to-day pressures of teaching can cause teachers (beginning and experienced) a good deal of stress.

This section is designed to give some ideas on managing time and stress that may be helpful to a beginning teacher. The mentor will likely share other ideas which have helped the mentor "cope" over the years.

Take the first year easy.
Don't volunteer for anything.
A beginning teacher

Time Management

There are two major goals in time management in teaching. First, it is important to get all the tasks which do not relate directly to teaching (district forms, cumulative record cards, memos, meetings), and the paper work related to teaching (lesson planning, grading, recording, etc.) under control. You will then have the maximum time available to teach students. Second, use the time available to teach to the greatest learning advantage for each student. The following suggestions relate to one or both of these tasks.

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- Use all of those good classroom management ideas to organize your room and your routines so that as a whole your classroom runs smoothly (remember proactive?). The beginning-of-the-year checklist outlines these items.

- Decide which tasks as a teacher you must do and which you can delegate to aides, volunteers, or students. Use educationally sound reasons to make these decisions. The following perspectives are offered for discussion with your mentor.

- Decide when you can do which tasks most efficiently. Do you plan best before school, after school, at lunch, prep time, or at home? If you are not naturally organized, the following steps may be of help.

    1. List out the routine things you need to do--plan, correct papers, record, bulletin boards, copy machine work, etc.
    2. Look at the time you have available: before school, during music, physical education or library.
    3. Consider outside factors (the copy machine is always crowded in the morning but not on your prep period, etc.).

- Keep a log of what you do for two weeks to find out where your time wasters occur.

- Watch out for time wasters (excessive talking to other teachers, or trips to the supply closet, etc.).

- Try to plan ahead for times that you know will involve extra work (before the end of a grading period).

- Try not to take on anything extra unless

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the reasons for taking it on balance out the time that is involved.

- Be sure to include time off in your regular daily schedule. If you don't schedule it, you won't get it.

Stress Management

Beginning teachers must expect to experience some stress. The literature on the concerns of beginning teachers doesn't specifically list stress as a concern, but if one looks at "reality shock" and the category of adjusting to the work environment and the other concerns in total, the conditions for stress are ripe. Stress can be positive, keeping you "on your toes," or negative, increasing your fatigue.

Long hours,
high degree of personal satisfaction,
rewarding.
A beginning teacher

- If stress is a problem for you, there are several good books about stress and how to deal with it. (See reference section.)
- The first step is to figure out what things cause you stress.
- The next step is to develop ways to minimize stress and/or deal with it in a way that fits your life style.
- Relaxation, deep muscle massage, exercise, and diet are all general ways to deal with stress.
- Focus on your strengths, celebrate and share your successes.
- Analyze the stressor. If stress is caused by something you can control, change what is causing the stress. If stress is caused by something you cannot control, use stress management techniques to deal with the stress. Learn to let the stress go.

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